pcsforpeople

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Broad Public-Private Partnership Brings
Affordable High-Speed Internet Access to East Cleveland

Business community, non-profit organizations and government come together to help close digital divide

East Cleveland, OH – April 7, 2021 – For the first time, residents in East Cleveland will have reliable and affordable broadband internet access, courtesy of a broad partnership encompassing the business community, state and local government officials, and non-profit PCs for People.

Financial commitments from the State of Ohio, Cuyahoga County, the Microsoft Airband Initiative, Eaton, and GE Lighting, a Savant company; access to University Hospitals facilities and Case Western Reserve University and East Cleveland school buildings and infrastructure; and coordination from the Urban League of Greater Cleveland and the Greater Cleveland Partnership all played pivotal roles in helping more than 1,000 families gain access to affordable broadband internet. Plans are in place to scale to 2,000 families and beyond.

"The generosity of so many has fueled our efforts to provide discounted computers and first-class internet to families and individuals with limited budgets," said Bryan Mauk, Chief Innovation Officer, PCs for People. "East Cleveland families with remote learners and workers, those looking for employment, and seniors who require e-health services will now be able to access the services they need at a price they can afford."

For $15 a month, East Cleveland residents will receive a free modem that will allow access to high-speed, unlimited internet access. For more information on how to enroll, residents are encouraged to call 216-352-5594 or log on to www.pcsforpeople.org/wisp. Callers are encouraged to leave a message if a representative is unable to answer due to a high volume of calls.

"East Cleveland, like many other urban and rural communities, lacked both infrastructure and access to low-cost broadband for many residents. This project plans to provide both infrastructure and access for up to 2,000 families," said Governor Mike DeWine. "Working with partners like GE Lighting, a Savant company and PCs for People have made projects like this possible."

"As soon as I learned that most families in East Cleveland didn't have access to high-speed internet, I told the InnovateOhio team we've got to fix this," said Lt. Governor Husted. "Starting today, more than 1,000 Ohio families, with many more to come, will have the opportunity to access affordable, high-speed internet – allowing students to do their homework online, parents to work online and families to be better able to participate in the modern economy, education and healthcare systems."

Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish added, "This initiative is a perfect example of state and local government, the business community and nonprofits all working together for residents to further bridge the digital divide in Cuyahoga County. Access to the internet is a necessity, and this effort is critical to our ongoing work to get as many residents as possible connected in a fair and equitable manner."

"Bringing affordable broadband to students and families in East Cleveland has the potential to transform lives," said Microsoft President Brad Smith. "This project is exactly the kind of public-private partnership we look for with our Airband Initiative, which aims to build digital equity for communities across the country."

At a total investment of under $500,000, the project came together in a few short months and the fixed wireless technology that makes it possible has been tried and tested. PCs for People previously deployed a similar broadband network in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood and is equipped to bring it to more neighborhoods and cities.

"While we're excited about what the launch of this program means for East Cleveland, we're just getting started," said Mauk. "We're optimistic about the potential for partnering with other companies, non-profit organizations and elected officials in the area that can help us reach the families that need our services most."

This effort is a small part of a broader ongoing campaign to reduce the impact of systemic racism and narrow the region's digital divide. In September 2020, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance named Cleveland as one of the country's worst connected cities. Nearly a third of the households in Cleveland lack broadband access and more than 20% of households do not currently own a computer.

Those interested in partnering with PCs for People can contact Bryan Mauk at bmauk@pcsforpeople.org or log on to pcsforpeople.org to learn more about the organization and its services.

PCs for People
Through electronic reuse PCs for People provides the opportunity for low-income individuals and non-profits to benefit from the life changing impact of computers, mobile internet, and digital literacy. Since 1998, PCs for People has been a driving force behind digital inclusion efforts across the U.S. We are a self-sustainable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a national reach. Self-sustainability is driven by our four-step approach – Source, Refurbish, Distribute, and Support. With strong partnerships and dedicated staff 250,000 computers have been distributed, 128,000 homes have internet access, and millions of pounds of electronics have been responsibly recycled.

Microsoft Airband Initiative
Microsoft's Airband Initiative is an effort to close the broadband gap and help communities use new connectivity to improve education, health care, and agriculture, and transform their businesses. The Airband Initiative works with the private and public sectors to invest in new technologies, accelerate broadband deployment, and support policy changes with the goal of bringing broadband access to millions of people across the world. The Airband Initiative is expanding to eight U.S. cities as part of Microsoft's Racial Equity Initiative, a commitment to address racial injustice and inequity for the Black and African American community in the United States. More information may be found at aka.ms/airband.